French approach to holiday cooking

Holiday festivities abound and many are searching for traditional types of food to serve at their family gatherings.

The French, best known for their creations of gastronomic delight, celebrate the Holiday Season with a magnificent feast called Reveillon or midnight meal.

Each region in France serves their special wines and goods. In Alsace, roast goose is the specialty, while in Burgundy it is chestnut stuffed turkey. The Bretons enjoy buckwheat cakes with sour cream. The Parisians mark the occasion with oysters and foie gras.

Families linger for hours sharing the dishes of everlasting tradition and the merriment of Reveillon. To help everyone restore a light feeling after the bounteous repast and before dessert, fresh fruits, cheese and a sparkling mineral water like Perrier are thoughtfully served.

The traditional dessert of Reveillon is Buche de Noel, a handsome and delicious yule log. Buche de Noel can become a French inspired dessert in your home as it is actually quite easy to do. A sponge cake filled with French Bonne Maman preserves is rolled then decorated with woodsy trimmings.

BUCHE DE NOEL
Spongecake (Genoise)

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
1 cup sifted all purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
4 eggs
2 egg yolks
¾ cup sugar
½ teaspoon vanilla extract
1 jar Bonne Maman Raspberry Preserves

1. Line greased jelly roll pan (15½ x 10½ inch) with wax paper. Grease and dust with flour lightly. Set aside.)

2. In large bowl put eggs, yolks, sugar and vanilla. Beat at high speed for 8 minutes. The mixture will triple in volume and be creamy. Fold in sifted flour and baking powder gently with slotted spoon lifting to aerate. Fold in melted butter. Do not overfold.

3. Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20 to 25 minutes.

4. Remove from oven. While cake is still in pan, cut off crisp edges. Invert pan on towel dusted with confectioners sugar. Remove wax paper at once. Roll both the cake and towel together. Cool on rack seam down.

5. Unroll carefully and fill with Bonne Maman Raspberry Preserves. Roll again.

Mocha Butter Cream Frosting

½ stick unsalted butter, softened
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 oz. Lindt Surfin Bittersweet Chocolate, melted
2 cups confectioners sugar
1½ teaspoons instant coffee
2-4 tablespoons heavy cream

1. Blend butter, one cup confectioners sugar. Add coffee that was dissolved in vanilla.

2. Add chocolate and heavy cream.

3. Add the remaining sugar until desired consistency.

Serves Eight.

Holiday sweets and other treats

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Carrot Cake

1½ cups vegetable oil
2 cups sugar
4 eggs
2 cups flour
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoon soda
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon nutmeg
3 cups carrots, grated
½ cup nuts, chopped

Mix together oil and sugar; add eggs. Sift dry ingredients. Blend into first mixture; add carrots and nuts. Grease and flour two 10-inch or three 8-inch layer pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes. When cool, ice with cream cheese icing.

Cream Cheese Icing

¼ cup butter
1 - 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
1 - 1 lb. confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla
½ cup pecans, chopped

Soften butter and cream cheese and beat together. Add sugar and vanilla; cream well. Stir in nuts. Spread on top.

Mini Cheese Cakes

1 8-oz. cream cheese
1 can Eagle Brand milk
½ cup lemon juice
½ cup sour cream
12 tart shells or vanilla wafers in a paper-lined cup.

In medium mixer bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy, add Eagle Brand Milk, mix well.

Stir in lemon juice and sour cream, chill 20 minutes, mound in tart shells. Chill until firm, about 2 hours. Garnish with chopped nuts, preserves or vanilla wafer crumbs.

Helen Anderson

Butterscotch-Pecan Dessert

1. 1 c. flour
¼ c. pecans
¼ c. brown sugar
1 stick butter

Mix and put in greased 13 x 9" pan. Bake 15 minutes at 350 degrees. Let cool.

2. 12 oz. cream cheese
1 c. cool whip
1 c. confectioners sugar

Mix and spread on crust.

3. 1 small pecan instant pudding
1 small butterscotch instant pudding

Mix as directed, but use only 3 cups cold milk. Spread on 2nd mixture.

4. Combine ¼ cups pecans and cool whip and spread on top.

Ruby Williamson

Exquisite Pie

2 c. sugar
1 c. margarine (2 sticks)
1 c. walnuts or pecans
2 tbsp. vinegar
1 c. raisins
1 c. coconut
6 eggs

Combine all ingredients and bake in uncooked pie shells at 325 degrees for 30 minutes. Yields 2 pies.

Frances Wilson

Fiesta Pie

1 c. raisens
1 c. pecans
1 c. coconut
2 c. white sugar
4 eggs
2 sticks butter
2 tsp. vanilla
2 tsp. vinegar

Combine all ingredients and bake in uncooked pie shells at 350 degrees for 30 to 35 minutes. Yields 2 pies.

Venice Lucado

Brownies

¼ lb. butter
2 squares chocolate
1 c. flour
1 c. sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla
pinch of salt
pecans

Melt butter and chocolate; add sugar, stir until well mixed. Then add eggs, flour, vanilla, and salt. Stir well but do not beat. Put in greased 9 x 12-inch pan. Bake at 400 degrees for 10 minutes. Let set until partially cooled, cut in squares.

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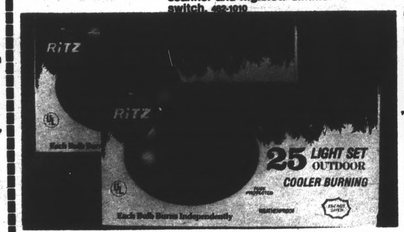

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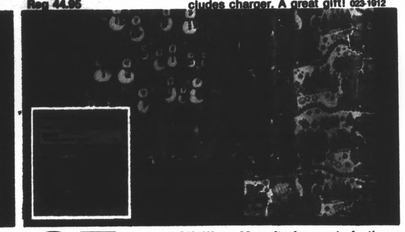

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